

Food security and humanitarian implications in West Africa and the Sahel

November 2011

Key points

- ▽ **Sahel alert:** Crop assessments report localized but significant declines in crop production in parts of the Sahel. Along with rising food prices, this situation jeopardizes most vulnerable households' access to food, and therefore their nutritional status.

Millions of people at risk of food insecurity in the Sahel

The regional meeting on the agriculture and food security outlook in West Africa and the Sahel (PREGEC), held in Cotonou (from 24 to 26 November), assessed the 2011 agropastoral season as follows: the 2011/2012 crop production in West Africa and the Sahel is estimated at 55,451,000 tons. This production increased by 4% compared to the 5-year-average and decreased by 8% compared to last year. For CILSS member countries, cereal production is estimated at 16,613,000 tons—a level comparable to the 5-year-average but 25% below the 2010 production.

Significant localized declines in crop production have been reported in Kayes, Koulikoro and Mopti in Mali, Central Senegal, Northern, Eastern and Central-north Burkina Faso, in Niger except in Maradi and Dosso, in all the Sahelian strip and in Logone and Tandjile in Chad, in all the agropastoral zone of Mauritania area and in the West of Cote d'Ivoire. Bad productions in controlled submersion rice-growing have also been recorded in Mali and in The Gambia. Due to rainfall deficits and irregular rainfalls, flood recession agriculture opportunities could be below average in Chad, Mauritania and Mali.

Low water levels could lead to significant low river levels, insufficient water access for off-cycle cropping opportunities and a decrease in fish production. However maize production surpluses in some of the Gulf of Guinea countries (Ghana, Togo, Nigeria and Benin) could be exported to food-deficit countries of the Sahel.

Regarding the pastoral situation, the Cotonou meeting highlighted that fodder deficit decline is significant in the Sahelian strip, except in the Gourma area (Burkina Faso and Mali). This situation, worsened by low water levels, provoked an early transhumance in Mali, Niger, Chad and Mauritania. Overgrazing and conflicts might therefore occur in host areas (Niger Delta, Gourma, Chad Lake, Salamat and Southern Chad, Northern Central African Republic, Northern Gulf of Guinea).

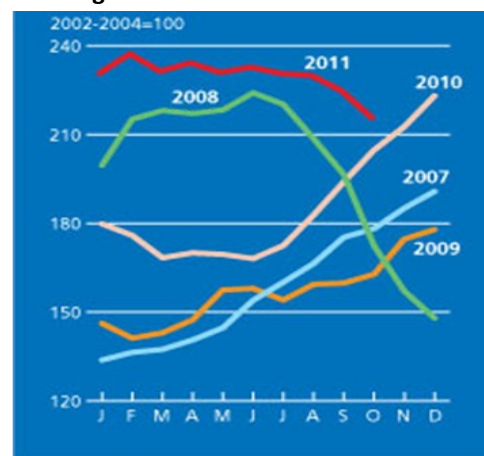
The desert locust situation remains calm. Low numbers of adults will move from Southern Mauritania to the Northwest of the country where there is a risk that higher than normal rain may fall during November. If this occurs, small-scale breeding will take place, causing locust numbers to increase. Elsewhere, scattered adults may persist in parts of Northern Mali, Niger and Eastern Chad.

Decrease in international prices

The **FAO Food Price Index (FFPI)** averaged 216 points in October 2011, down 4 percent, or 9 points, from September and 22 points, or 9 percent, below its peak of 238 points reached in February 2011.

The Index has been falling steadily since June and, in October, dropped to an 11-month low, but still some 5 percent above the corresponding period last year. The decline reflects sharp decreases in international prices of all the commodities included in the Index.

Figure 1: FAO Food Price Index



Early rise of millet prices in Niger and Mali

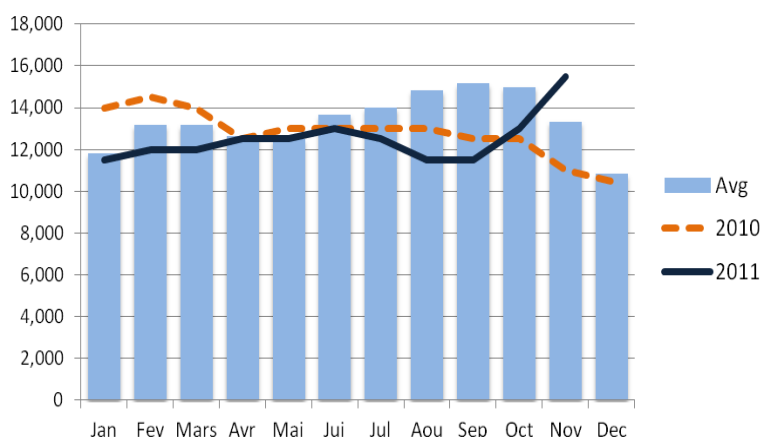
In November, coarse grain prices experienced unseasonal increases on Sahelian markets. In Niger, according to the national market information system, millet prices in Maradi increased by 28% within one month (from 14,000 FCFA in October to 18,000 FCFA in November). Considering that Maradi is a leading market, this rise should be passed on to other markets. Over the same period, the price of a 100kg maize bag increased by 9% in Gaya market (through which maize imports from Benin is channeled). At the end of November in Niger, millet increased by 34% and maize by 21% year-on-year.

In Mali, millet increased by 19% in Segou (a surplus producing area) from October to November. Millet prices are currently 16% higher than the 5-year-average. Millet increased by 17% in Sikasso production area and by 13% in Gao. By contrast, in Burkina Faso prices remain stable (Ouagadougou) or show a slight upward trend (+3% in Dori).

According to a CILSS/WFP joint market study conducted in November in the Western Sahel (Mali), millet and sorghum are becoming scarce in the area in the aftermath of the poor rainy season. A 'dash for maize' is taking place as wholesalers secure maize from the Savannah zone to supply food deficit

flows developed, partially making up for low local coarse grain availability in coarse grain. Maize sold in food-deficit markets of the Western Sahel is coming from Sikasso or even from Cote d'Ivoire.

Figure 3: Millet price in Segou, 2008-2011. Average 2008-2010

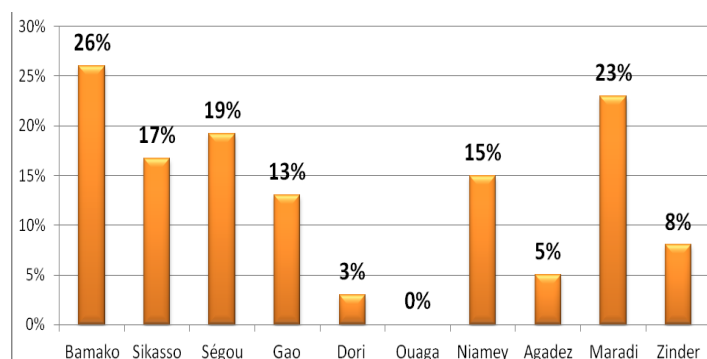


Sources: WFP, OMA

In Bamako's Bagdadji market, maize is the only cereal available from wholesalers. Consequently, millet, maize and sorghum prices are on the rise in all studied markets. Considering that maize transfers from the savannah are already taking place, surpluses levels in source areas deserve to be further assessed.

Thanks to demand for the end-of-year holidays, the livestock sector has been very active and prices are similar to those of last year. However, due to higher coarse grain prices, herders' purchase power is declining (figure 5). In Niger, on a sample of pastoral markets, abnormal price trends were reported in September. Though livestock prices remain above average, the general trend indicates a poor season. Whereas prices should have increased by 8 to 12% between August and September, they only increased by 2% in 2011 (+2% in 2008 and -2% in 2009).

Figure 2: Evolution of millet prices, October-November 2011

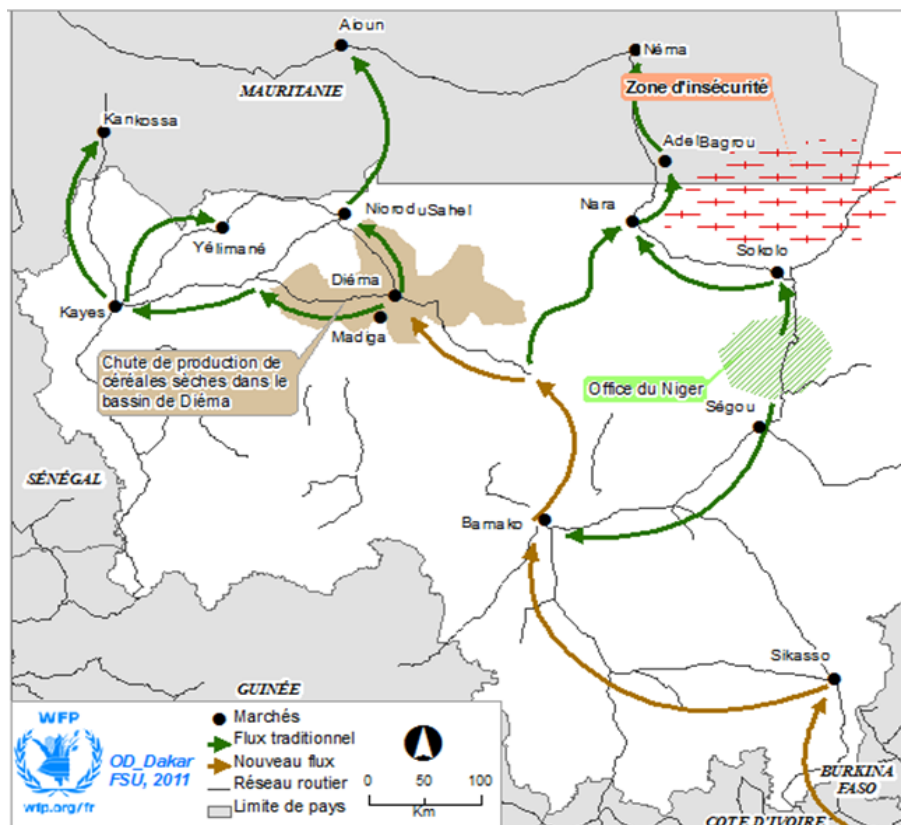


Sources: WFP, SIM

areas of the Western Sahel. Therefore new long distance grain

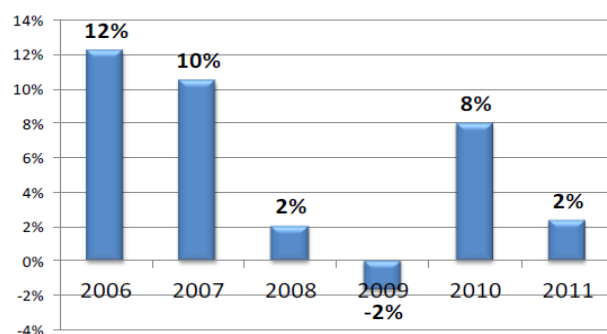
Early rise in millet prices in Niger and Mali

Figure 4: Cereal flows in the Western Sahel



Source: Cross border flows study, November 2011, WFP

Figure 5: Livestock price, August-September on pastoral Nigerian markets



Sources: WFP, SIM data

On the macroeconomic side, recent exchange rates trends are favourable to CFA zone. Currencies of non-CFA countries have depreciated against the Franc CFA, which should support traders' capacities to import cereals. The Sudanese Pound has lost a quarter of its value against the Franc CFA since 2009. This will limit the competitiveness of Chadian grains on the markets of Darfour, where they were exported during 2010 crisis. The Naira has depreciated by 10% against the Franc CFA over the same period. However, the Mauritanian Ouguiya's depreciation against the CFA franc may hamper coarse grain imports from Senegal and Mali.

Assessments are underway

The communiqué of the PREGEC meeting held in Cotonou stated that the decline in crop and fodder production and high food prices are affecting the most vulnerable population, which might be food insecure in the coming months.

In partnership with WFP, FAO and NGOs, Governments have decided to conduct detailed assessment of households' impact of crop and fodder decline in affected areas. A study on

households' vulnerability and markets of affected and cross-border areas is currently conducted by the Mauritanian government and WFP. In Mali, starting mid-December, WFP and FAO will conduct a similar joint assessment. From November to December, Governments, WFP and FAO will collect data in affected areas of Chad and Senegal as well. In Niger and Burkina Faso, assessments are underway. These studies will help to refine appropriate emergency responses.

Governments' initial plans to respond to the crisis

The Presidents of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso announced that their countries had experienced below average crop and fodder productions and expressed their concern regarding the looming food difficulties that might affect their countries. The Mauritanian Prime Minister announced during a press conference on November 10, an intervention plan. Plan will respond to the crisis mainly through subsidized sales (raising the question of the targeting of the beneficiaries and the interventions' cost).

Mauritania (Ouguiyas 44 billion-USD 157m)

- fodder: 312 000 tones
- 7 000 special shops (subsidized items)
- 2 000 villages security stocks replenishment

- food distribution (560 000 persons / 5 months)

Mali (FCFA 77 billion-USD 159m)

- subsidized sales in most affected areas (70 000 t)
- food distribution (45 000 t)
- seeds and tools distribution (FCFA 4 million)
- national stock replenishment (15 000 t)

Burkina Faso (FCFA 6 billion-USD 12m)

Niger (FCFA 160 billion-USD 331m)

- rain fed crop emergency program
- livestock emergency program
- income-generating activities
- national stock replenishment

Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia's EHAPs remain underfunded

Ivorian IDPs and refugees continue to return to their villages of origin. In Liberia, as of October 15, 138.164 people have been registered by HCR (from 178.035 as of September 22). No massive population movement has been observed in hosting refugees areas after presidential election. As of November 28, the EHAP Liberia is funded at 53% (OCHA; FTS-Financial Tracking System).

In order to facilitate the return of displaced persons from the Catholic Church site in Duékoué to their villages of origin, humanitarian actors in collaboration with local authorities

organized three repatriation convoys of IDPs between 16 and 21 November. Some 798 people out of the 1,335 people initially registered were accompanied to districts of Duékoué and surrounding villages. The repatriation exercise for the fourth batch of IDPs will soon follow. In return areas in the West of the country, according to WFP, food assistance is still needed to improve food access for households who have not been able to work in their cocoa or coffee fields and while there is a decline in crop production (CILSS). As of November 28, the Côte d'Ivoire EHAP is funded at 36% (OCHA).

Recommendations for the regional food security and nutrition working group

Measures	Advantages
Support countries affected by food and pastoral crisis with comprehensive food security and nutrition assessments	Affected households are identified and responses are based on a relevant analysis
Finalize and disseminate the Sahel strategic paper	Preparatory activities are taken on time
Fund the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan (EHAP) Côte d'Ivoire + 4, the Liberia EHAP and the 2011 CAP	The needs of vulnerable households and people affected by post-election crisis are better covered

Conclusions

▽ In areas in the Sahel affected by a decline in cereal and fodder production and high cereals prices, the food access and livelihoods of most vulnerable households are quickly deteriorating. Their nutritional status might be jeopardized as well. Appropriate responses to assist the most vulnerable households and strengthen their livelihoods (food supplies, agricultural and nutritional inputs) should be undertaken immediately.

▽ Ivorian IDPs and refugees' return continues. Returnees are in need of assistance as well as households who remain on sites (camps and host communities).



Food security information in West Africa and the Sahel

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